



2019 NEUROLOGIC SPECIALIST CERTIFICATION CANDIDATE GUIDE



SPRING 2018

Dear Fellow Physical Therapist:

Congratulations! By acquiring this Candidate Guide, you have been proactive in your interest in and pursuit of specialist certification. The specialist certification program has been designed to identify and define physical therapy specialty areas and to formally recognize physical therapists who have attained advanced knowledge and skills in those areas.

Certification also assists the public and health care community in identifying therapists with acknowledged expertise in a particular field of practice and demonstrates that physical therapists are devoted to addressing the unique needs of the people with whom we work.

Certification is achieved through successful completion of a standardized online application and examination process. Coordination of this program is provided by the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS), the governing body for approval of new specialty areas and certification of clinical specialists. Specialty councils representing the 9 recognized specialty areas have been appointed to delineate and describe the advanced knowledge, skills, and abilities of clinical specialists; determine specific requirements for certification; and develop the certification examinations.

The dedicated volunteers currently giving their time and service to the development of this process are listed in the rosters in the beginning of this booklet. APTA established this program in 1978 to provide formal recognition for physical therapists with advanced clinical knowledge, competence, and skills in a special area of practice. The program evolved from the membership of special interest sections of APTA as a way to encourage and facilitate the professional growth of individual members and thereby facilitate growth of the entire profession.

Certified specialists have clearly demonstrated their commitment to service by the variety, depth, and consistency of their professional involvement. Their desire to attain formal recognition of their advanced clinical knowledge, competence, and skills reflects their devotion to their profession and their patients. In these times of dramatic health care reform, dedication to public service by providing high quality physical therapy services is paramount.

If you share these personal and professional principles, then you are in the right place! Please join the growing number of physical therapists who have chosen this pathway of professional development.

Thank you for your interest and I wish you success in this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Ronald Barredo, PD, DPT, EdD

Board-Certified Geriatrics Clinical Specialist
Chair, American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties

ROSTERS

AMERICAN BOARD OF PHYSICAL THERAPY SPECIALTIES SPECIALTY COUNCIL

AMERICAN BOARD OF PHYSICAL THERAPY SPECIALTIES

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1. GENERAL DEFINITIONS

1.1. American Physical Therapy Association

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) is a national professional organization representing more than 100,000 physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, and physical therapy students throughout the United States. Its goals are to serve its members and to serve the public by increasing the understanding of the physical therapist's role in the health care system, and by fostering improvements in physical therapy education, practice, research, and professional development.

APTA established the specialist certification program in 1978 to provide formal recognition for physical therapists with advanced clinical knowledge, experience, and skills in a special area of practice, and to assist consumers and the health care community to identify physical therapy specialists.

1.2. American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties

Coordination and oversight of the specialist certification process is provided by the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS), which is the governing body for approval of new specialty areas and certification of clinical specialists. ABPTS comprises board-certified physical therapists from different specialty areas; a physical therapist member of the APTA Board of Directors; an individual with expertise in test development, evaluation, and education; and a nonphysical therapist member representing the public.

The American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) prohibits preferential treatment or adverse discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, gender, age, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, disability or health status in all areas including, but not limited to, its qualifications for membership, rights of members, policies, programs, activities, and employment practices.

1.3. Specialty Council

The Specialty Council, representing the area of neurologic physical therapy, has been appointed to delineate the advanced knowledge, skills, and abilities for their specialty area; to determine the academic and clinical requirements for certification; and to develop the certification examinations and oversee the maintenance of specialist certification. The Council comprises 4 board-certified specialists in the practice area.

1.4. Additional Physical Therapy Examinations

Individuals interested in Cardiovascular & Pulmonary, Clinical Electrophysiology, Geriatric, Oncologic, Orthopaedic, Pediatric, Sports, and Women's Health certifications must complete a separate online application, accessible through APTA's Specialist Certification Program website (www.abpts.org).

1.5. National Board of Medical Examiners

The National Board of Medical Examiners® (NBME®) is a nonprofit organization that strives to provide the highest quality testing and research services to organizations involved in the licensure and certification of medical and health science professionals. NBME provides test development, test administration, editorial production, and psychometric services to ABPTS and the specialty councils.

1.6. Prometric

NBME currently delivers the specialist certification examinations by computer through Prometric. Prometric administers testing programs for educational institutions, professional associations, corporations, and other organizations. Examinations are delivered in test centers that have secure rooms dedicated to test delivery.

Note: Prometric test center locations are subject to change, and there is no guarantee that a center listed on the Prometric website at the time of application will be available for a future ABPTS administration. The most efficient way for candidates to check for test center locations is to log on to www.prometric.com/ABPTS and select "locate a test center." This provides the most up-to-date information.

1.7. Restriction of the Term Board-Certified Specialist

APTA's House of Delegates adopted a policy that no physical therapist shall purport to be a "Board-Certified Clinical Specialist" unless (s)he has successfully completed the certification process as developed by the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (HOD 06- 94-23-39). In addition, ABPTS does not permit applicants for certification to state that they are "board eligible."

2. CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

2.1 General Requirements

Applicants must hold a current permanent/unrestricted license to practice physical therapy in the United States or any of its possessions or territories. In addition, applicants are required to pay the application review fee.

Applicants must meet the minimum eligibility requirements for the 2019 examination by the application deadline of **July 31, 2018**.

Applicants must submit a complete application and review fee for each specialist certification examination.

ABPTS does not permit applicants to use the same direct patient care hours for different specialty areas.

2.2 Other Requirements to Sit for the Neurologic Specialty Examination

Applicants must meet requirements for Option A or Option B.

Option A

Applicants must submit evidence of 2,000 hours of direct patient care as a licensed United States physical therapist (temporary license excluded) in the specialty area within the last ten (10) years, 25% (500) of which must have occurred within the last three (3) years. Direct patient care must include activities in each of the elements of patient/client management applicable to the specialty area and included in the *Description of Specialty Practice (DSP)*.

These elements, as defined by the *Guide to Physical Therapist Practice*, are examination, evaluation, diagnosis, prognosis, and intervention.

Option B

Applicants must submit evidence of successful completion of an APTA-accredited postprofessional clinical residency completed within the last 10 years that has a curriculum plan reflective of the *Description of Specialty Practice: Neurologic Physical Therapy* (DSP). Experience from residencies in which the curriculum plan reflects only a portion of the DSP will not be considered.

Applicants must submit evidence of successful completion of an APTA-accredited post professional Neurologic clinical residency. Applicants who are currently enrolled in an ABPTRFE-accredited clinical residency, or enrolled in a residency program that has been granted candidacy status, may apply for the specialist certification examination in the appropriate specialty area prior to completion of the residency. These applicants will be conditionally approved to sit for the examination, as long as they meet all other eligibility requirements, pending submission of evidence of successful completion of the ABPTRFE-accredited clinical residency to APTA's Specialist Certification Program no later than 1 month before the examination window opens. To verify your residency program's accreditation status, please visit www.abptrfe.org.

2.3. Steps to Complete Certification

Certification as a Physical Therapy Clinical Specialist consists of 2 major steps:

STEP 1. You must submit evidence that you have fulfilled the minimum eligibility requirements as defined by the specialty council. This includes completion of all required application forms, fees, documentation of the required practice hours, and other requirements specified by the specialty council.

You must meet all requirements by the application deadline, July 31, 2018. The Specialty Council will not consider experience toward the minimum eligibility requirements that was not acquired by the application deadline.

STEP 2. Following completion of Step 1 and approval of the application, the candidate must sit for and receive a passing score on the computer-based certification exam.

Certification is awarded for a period of 10 years. ABPTS has adopted a model of continued competency throughout the years of certification rather than a one-time recertification process as the certification period lapses. This model is titled the "Maintenance of Specialist Certification (MOSC)." Please review details of the MOSC program in Section 2.4.

2.4. Maintenance of Specialist Certification (MOSC)

ABPTS has developed a model for maintaining certification that focuses on continuing competence of the physical therapist specialist. This new model has been titled the "Maintenance of Specialist Certification" and includes the following elements:

- Professional Standing and Direct Patient Care Hours
- Commitment to Lifelong Learning Through Professional Development
- Practice Performance Through Examples of Patient Care and Clinical Reasoning
- Cognitive Expertise Through a Test of Knowledge in the Profession

Requirement 1: Professional Standing and Direct Patient Care Hours

- In years 3, 6, and 9, a specialist must submit evidence of current licensure as a physical therapist in the United States or any of its possessions or territories.
- In years 3, 6, and 9, a specialist must submit evidence of 200 hours of direct patient care acquired in the specialty area within the last 3 years. Direct patient care hours accrued in year 10 may be applied to the year 3 requirements for the next MOSC cycle.

Requirement 2: Commitment to Lifelong Learning Through Professional Development

- Each board-certified specialist is obligated to participate in ongoing professional development, **within his or her designated specialty area**, which leads to a level of practice consistent with acceptable standards. Each specialist may choose to pursue professional development that leads to a level of practice beyond prevailing standards.
- A web-based system to track continuing competence in a specialty area will be developed. This system will provide an individual account tracking mechanism for each specialist to record professional development activities during years 3, 6, and 9 of his or her certification cycle. There is not an hour requirement in this area, but the specialist must show evidence of professional development activities (equivalent to 10 MOSC credits) within 2 of the 3 designated activity categories in years 3, 6, and 9. By year 9, a specialist must have accrued a minimum of 30 MOSC credits and demonstrated professional development in each of the 3 designated activity categories. These activities include professional services, continuing education coursework, publications, presentations, clinical supervision and consultation, research, clinical instruction, and teaching.

Requirement 3: Practice Performance Through Examples of Clinical Care and Reasoning

- The purpose of this requirement is to document continuing competency in patient/client management in the specialty area.
- The specialist will use an online system to complete 1 reflective portfolio submission in years 3, 6, and 9 of his or her certification cycle. These reflective portfolio submissions will be used to demonstrate the specialist's use of clinical care and reasoning. Each submission must have a reflective component and must have documentation that reflects clinical reasoning.
- These reflective portfolio submissions will not be scored but will be screened for completion of required information and reflection.

Requirement 4: Cognitive Expertise Through a Test of Knowledge in the Profession

- During year 10 of the certification cycle, the specialist will be required to sit for a recertification examination, comprising approximately 100 items. The exam will be specialty specific, assess an individual's cognitive expertise in the specialty area, and **reflect contemporary specialist practice**.
- The exam blueprint breakdown for this exam will mirror that of the initial certification exam, as noted in the various *Descriptions of Specialty Practice*. Items will be coded and pulled from existing specialty item banks.

- Successful completion of requirements 1-3 are prerequisites for sitting for the recertification exam. If a specialist fails to receive a passing score after the first attempt, he or she will be permitted to sit for the exam 1 additional time and will maintain his or her certification during this 1-year grace period.

Any additional questions/concerns should be addressed to staff at spec-recert@apta.org or 800/999-APTA (2782), ext 3390.

2.5. Ineligibility for Certification

Item writers and reviewers are not eligible to sit for the specialist certification examination in their specialty area for 2 years from the date of involvement in the process.

Specialty council members, ABPTS members, and cut-score study participants are prohibited from sitting for the specialist certification exam for a period of 2 years from the date of participation in the certification process.

3. APPLICATION PROCESS

3.1. Application Deadline

Completed applications and application review fees for the 2019 specialist certification examinations must be submitted online to the APTA Specialist Certification Program on or before July 31, 2018. Applications submitted after the deadline may not be reviewed.

3.2. Procedures for Application Review

The Specialist Certification Program staff will review all submitted documents and will notify applicants by email regarding approval to sit for the exam within approximately 6 weeks. Applicants who are advised to revise or provide new documents will be instructed to resubmit materials to APTA headquarters by a specified deadline.

If the applicant does not resubmit by the specified deadline, the record will indicate that he or she has not met the minimum eligibility requirements and is not approved to sit for the 2019 exam.

3.3. Services for Persons With Disabilities

The American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS) provides reasonable and appropriate accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act for individuals with documented disabilities who demonstrate a need for accommodations.

It is the responsibility of the person with a disability to provide advance notice and appropriate documentation of the disability with a request for test accommodations. If an applicant identifies functional limitations or special needs that would prevent him or her from taking the certification exam under standard testing conditions, ABPTS in consultation with its testing agency, will evaluate and respond to that applicant's needs for special arrangements.

Any requests must be submitted to ABPTS, accompanied by the appropriate forms and uploaded at the time of online application submission for the exam (by July 31, 2018). The request for testing accommodations must include verification of the disabling condition from a professional specializing in the relevant area and a description of the requested accommodation. Applicants will be notified in the fall of the decision regarding the request and the accommodations that will be provided. If accommodation is not requested in advance, availability of accommodation cannot be guaranteed.

Note: Certain testing accommodations may require shared cost with candidate.

3.4. Certification in More Than 1 Specialty Area

Applicants must submit a complete set of online application materials and fees for each specialist certification exam. A certified specialist who applies for certification in a second specialty area is not permitted to submit the same direct patient care hours that he or she submitted for certification in the first specialty area. The Specialist Certification Program staff will review previously submitted applications for duplication of hours.

3.5. Submission of Application

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the application is completed according to instructions.

In addition, it is imperative that you enter your name on the application exactly as it appears on the identification form you intend to present at the testing center. Please note that the way your name is entered on the application is also the way your name will appear in the APTA membership database.

Applicants who opt to pay the review fee by check should send the application fee with the appropriate payment form described in Section 3.6 below in a single mailing to:

APTA
Specialist Certification Application
P.O. Box 75701
Baltimore, MD 21275

If applicable, verification of current physical therapy license must be sent separately by your state licensing agency.

3.6. Application Review Fee

The nonrefundable application review fee must be submitted with your online application and submitted to the APTA Specialist Certification Program on or before July 31, 2018.

Payment of the review fee may be made by check (payable to APTA) or by credit card (MasterCard, VISA, Discover, or American Express). The Payment Form must accompany your fee. The applicant review fees are listed below:

APTA Member: \$525
Non-APTA Member: \$870
Member/Non-APTA Member Reapplication: \$170

Note: Reapplication fee is due by August 31, 2018

3.7. Time Limit for Active Application /Reapplication

Applicant files will remain active for only 2 consecutive exam administrations. However, eligibility for the second exam administration requires an online reapplication submission by August 31, along with a \$170 reapplication fee, as well as the current examination fee by November 30. This policy applies to those who choose to delay sitting for the exam, those who are not approved to sit for the examination, and those who do not pass the exam. Eligible reapplicants will receive reapplication information by email directly from the Specialist Certification Program. To reapply, you must submit an online reapplication, verification of current licensure to practice physical therapy, updated direct patient care hours, and any other requested documentation. The APTA Specialist Certification Program must receive

this documentation by the reapplication deadline for the next scheduled exam. Reapplicants must meet the current practice requirements to be eligible to sit for the exam.

After 2 consecutive exam administrations, you must submit an entirely new application and initial applicant review fee to apply for specialist certification.

3.8. Address Changes

Should your mailing address, email address, or phone number change, please notify the APTA Specialist Certification Program immediately. The Specialist Certification Program maintains separate records from APTA's membership database, so candidates must write or phone the department directly at 800/999-2782, ext 8520.

4. SCHEDULING THE EXAM

4.1. Examination Fee and Scheduling Permit

The examination fee is submitted after you have been notified that you are eligible to sit for the exam. The fee must be received by the APTA Specialist Certification Program on or before November 30, 2018.

You may pay the examination fee by check (payable to APTA) or by credit card (MasterCard, VISA, DISCOVER or AMEX), by mail or online. Please note that both first-time and repeat test takers must pay the following examination fees:

APTA Member: \$810
Non-APTA Member: \$1,535

Contact the Specialist Certification Program at 800/999-2782, ext 8520, for additional information about sitting for the specialist certification examination in an international location.

Before the end of December, after your examination fee has been received, APTA's Specialist Certification Program will send you an email with instructions on how to access and download your electronic scheduling permit online. You must print your scheduling permit before you contact Prometric to schedule a test date. Check to make sure that the information on your permit is correct, and that your name (first name, middle initials, last name) exactly matches your name on the identification you will use on the day of the examination. If the name on your permit does not match the name on your identification, you must contact APTA immediately. Name changes or corrections cannot be made within 7 business days of your scheduled testing date. You will be denied admission to the test if the name on the permit does not match the name on your identification.

4.2. Test Dates

The examination will be administered at testing centers worldwide between the dates of **March 2 and March 16, 2019**.

4.3. How to Schedule an Appointment at a Testing Center

The Specialist Certification Program will notify approved candidates when they may begin to schedule a date to sit for the examination. Candidates are not eligible to schedule a session until they have paid their exam fee and have their scheduling permit.

You **must print or download** your scheduling permit before you contact Prometric to schedule a testing appointment. To schedule a testing

appointment, you will need to provide Prometric with the scheduling number that is included on your scheduling permit. Appointments are assigned on a first-come, first-served basis; therefore, you should schedule an appointment as soon as possible after you have accessed your scheduling permit. If you delay scheduling you may not be able to make an appointment at your preferred test site or for your preferred test date. You should report any problems in scheduling a testing appointment to the Specialist Certification Program at least 4 weeks before the first day of the testing window to give ABPTS an opportunity to resolve the problem.

Prior to your testing appointment, you can log in at the URL provided by the Specialist Certification Program to access and reprint your permit if necessary.

4.4. Refunds and Cancellations

The Applicant Review Fee is not refundable. You must notify the specialist certification program staff through the on-line application system deferment process if you decide, for any reason, not to sit for the 2019 exam. Upon receipt of written notification, your examination fee will be refunded minus 20% of the fee. **Please allow 6-8 weeks for processing.**

4.5. Rescheduling an Exam

If you are unable to keep a testing appointment and would like to reschedule, you must contact Prometric by 12:00 pm local time of the second business day prior to your appointment. The rescheduled test date must fall within the testing window. Fees from your previously scheduled test will be transferred to the rescheduled exam as follows:

- a. If you contact Prometric by 12:00 pm local time of the second business day prior to your test date, you will be permitted to reschedule without penalty. If you provide less than 2 business days' notice, Prometric will charge a \$101 fee to reschedule your examination (*rescheduling fees vary for international sites*).
- b. If you cancel your appointment within 2 business days or do not appear on your test date, you must contact Prometric Candidate Cares at the phone number listed in the permit and pay a \$101 fee to reinstate your eligibility record in order to reschedule your appointment within the testing window (*rescheduling fees vary for international sites*).

5. PREPARING FOR THE EXAM

5.1. Description of Specialty Practice (DSP)

The *Descriptions of Specialty Practice* (DSP) are documents developed for each specialty area that outline the knowledge, skills, and abilities related to clinical practice in the specialty area. The DSP content is based on a detailed practice analysis conducted by the specialty council. A practice analysis involves extensive research, including survey data and judgments of subject matter experts, of the knowledge, tasks, and roles that describe advanced specialty practice. The specialty council develops the written exam from the DSP and includes a percentage of questions from each of the major content areas identified in the practice analysis. Because applicants will find the DSP for their specialty area helpful in organizing exam preparation, a copy is made available electronically to each new applicant upon receipt of the application and payment of the application review fee. If you wish to purchase an advance copy of the DSP, please contact APTA's Member Services at 800/999-2782.

5.2. Exam Content Outline

The content outline for the exam that specifies the percentage of questions in each major content area is found on page 9. The content outline is presented as an approximation of the test construction and should not be interpreted as an exact distribution of test items.

5.3. Preparation for the Exam

You declare your intent to sit for the specialist certification exam at the time of application and are expected to begin preparation for the exam at that time. You are responsible for determining the method and amount of preparation necessary for the exam. Results from candidate surveys suggest that helpful methods of examination preparation include, but are not limited to, advanced level texts, *Physical Therapy*, and other journals containing current physical therapy research. You may also want to review the *Description of Specialty Practice* and the content outline to determine what content will be covered on the exam and to direct your study efforts.

5.4. Review Materials and Courses

A resource guide listing prepared by APTA's Academy of Neurologic Physical Therapy Inc. can be found on page 11. Some sections hold review courses related to advanced practice in their specialty area. Applicants should contact their section directly to receive information. Neither ABPTS nor the specialty councils review or endorse the content of review materials and courses.

5.5. Study Groups

The APTA Specialist Certification Program maintains a list of candidates who are interested in participating in study groups. To be included in study group listings, select "participate in study group" and answer "yes" on the online application. Study group lists will be generated and emailed by November 17, 2018, to candidates who have indicated their interest in participating in study groups. **Study group lists are emailed by request only.**

5.6. Exam Development

The specialist certification examinations are developed by specialty councils of ABPTS. APTA has contracted with NBME to assist in the development, administration, scoring, and reporting of results for the certification examinations. Using the DSP as a basis, the specialty councils make the final determinations regarding the exam content and the number of items in each area.

Questions (items) for the exam are solicited from content area experts currently practicing in the specialty area representing the full range of practice settings and focus in all regions of the country. Item writers attend workshops and receive instruction to enable them to write high-quality, practice-related test items. Test items undergo extensive editing and review by subject matter experts and professional test editors before specialty councils approve them to be placed on the examinations.

5.7. Exam Question Format

Questions (items) are designed to test synthesis and analysis levels of cognitive skills, as well as content knowledge. The exam is composed of objective multiple-choice questions with 4 or 5 answer choices. The questions either stand alone or are part of a series that relates to a presented case study. Beginning on page 10 are sample questions that are representative of the format of questions for each exam, but may not necessarily reflect the ability level or content of the items. There are 200 items on the exam, consisting of 50 questions in each 1½-hour time block.

5.8. Answer Strategy

You should consider answers to each question carefully and eliminate the least likely ones instead of randomly selecting an answer. Please keep in mind that there is no penalty for incorrect responses. Since test scores are based on the actual number of questions answered correctly, it is to the candidate's advantage to select an answer for each question rather than leaving any blank. There is only one best answer for each question.

5.9. Tutorial

After you are approved to sit for the examination, the Specialist Certification Program will make available a tutorial so that you may practice using the testing software prior to your test day. The tutorial can be accessed on the APTA Specialist Certification website (www.abpts.org/SpecCertExamTutorial/). You should acquaint yourself with the testing software well before your test date. Test center staff are not authorized to provide instruction on use of the software.

The tutorial will also be available at the beginning of the examination session. You may use up to 10 minutes before beginning the examination. The test driver is easy to understand and requires little or no prior computer experience.

6. SITTING FOR THE EXAM

6.1. Computerized Testing

The specialist certification examinations are administered by computer. The examination questions are presented on computers, and candidates provide their responses using a mouse or keyboard. NBME works with Prometric to deliver these examinations worldwide at more than 300 test centers. Approved candidates should contact Prometric as soon as possible once they have their scheduling permit to schedule a testing appointment. Candidates may take the test on any day that it is offered during the testing window, provided that there is space at the Prometric test center of choice.

6.2. Test Centers and Testing Conditions

Prometric provides computer-based testing services for academic assessment, professional licensure, and certification. Please be aware that there may be test takers from other professions taking examinations during your test administration. Their exam schedule may differ from your schedule, and they may arrive and depart at different times.

These test centers provide the resources necessary for secure administration of the examination, including video and audio monitoring and recording, and use of digital cameras to record the identity of candidates.

6.3. Exam Time

You should arrive 30 minutes before your scheduled testing appointment.

The official exam time begins the moment that you enter your Candidate identification number. There are 200 questions on the exam. The exam is administered during a seven (7) hour testing session, which consists of a brief tutorial (up to 10 minutes), four 1½-hour test-blocks, and 50 minutes of optional break time to be used after any block. Please note that if you finish a section early, you may not use the extra time for a different section of the exam, however, this time will be available as additional break time.

If you have unused time after you complete the examination, you will be given the opportunity to complete an online survey about the test administration. The purpose of the survey is to evaluate the test scheduling and delivery procedures. Your responses will be kept confidential, and the time you take to complete this survey will not detract from your allotted examination time.

6.4. Admission to the Test

You should arrive at the test center at least 30 minutes before your scheduled testing time on your testing day. If you arrive late, the test center administrator may refuse you admission. If you arrive more than 30 minutes after your scheduled testing time, you will not be admitted. In that event, you must pay a \$101 fee to Prometric to reinstate your eligibility record in order to reschedule your appointment within the testing window (*rescheduling fees vary for international sites*).

Upon arrival at the test center, you must present a printed copy of your scheduling permit or present it electronically (e.g. via Smartphone) and an unexpired, government-issued form of identification (such as a current driver's license, valid passport, or military ID) that includes both your photograph and signature. If your identification contains your photograph but not your signature, you may use another form of unexpired identification that contains your signature, such as student/employee identification card or a credit card, to supplement your photo-bearing, government-issued identification.

As a security procedure, you will be photographed before you begin taking the examination. You will also sign a test center log, and store your personal belongings in your assigned locker. You will be scanned with a handheld metal detector and be asked to empty and turn out your pockets prior to entry into the testing room to confirm that you have no prohibited items. You will be required to remove eyeglasses for visual inspection by the test center administrators. Jewelry, except for wedding and engagement rings, is prohibited and hair accessories are subject to inspection. You should not wear ornate clips, combs, barrettes, headbands, and other hair accessories. Any examinee wearing any of these items may be prohibited from wearing them in the testing room, and asked to store such items in their locker. These inspections will take a few seconds, and will be done at check-in and upon return from breaks.

If you brought a printed copy of your scheduling permit, the Test Center Staff will collect it. You will be provided with laminated writing surfaces and markers. You will be instructed to write your name and Candidate Information Number (CIN) on one of the laminated writing surfaces provided. Your scheduling permit will be retained by the Test Center Administrator. You may request access to the permit during the examination if it becomes necessary for you to rewrite the CIN on the laminated writing surface. Test Center Staff will escort you to your assigned testing station and provide brief instructions on use of the computer equipment. Laminated writing surfaces and markers issued are to be used for making notes and/or calculations during the testing session. They should only be used at your assigned testing station, and only after you have begun your examination by entering your CIN. You must enter your CIN to start the examination, which will begin with a brief tutorial prior to the first test block. If you have filled the laminated writing surfaces and need additional space for making notes, you will need to notify test center staff and a replacement will be provided. Laminated writing surfaces must be returned to test center staff at the end of the testing session.

Important Note: You will not be admitted to the testing room without presenting either a printed or electronic copy of your permit and an unexpired, government-issued form of identification (such as a driver's license or passport) that includes **both** your photograph and signature.

The name on your scheduling permit must exactly match the name on your identification form. The only acceptable difference would be the presence of middle name or middle initial, or suffix on one document and its absence on the other. If you do not present your permit and required identification on the exam day, you will be denied admission to test. In that event, you

must pay a fee to Prometric to reschedule your test (see section 4.5 for additional instructions).

6.5. Testing Regulations and Rules of Conduct

Test center staff monitor all testing sessions. Candidates must follow instructions of test center staff throughout the examination. Test center staff are not authorized to answer questions from candidates regarding examination content, testing software, or scoring.

If staff observes a candidate violating test administration rules or engaging in other forms of irregular behavior during an examination, the test center staff will not necessarily tell the candidate of the observation at the time of the examination. Test Center Administrators are required to report such incidents to NBME; each is fully investigated.

Candidates may not bring any personal belongings into the testing area, including but not limited to the following:

- Mechanical or electronic devices, such as cellular telephones, calculators, watches of any type, electronic paging devices, recording or filming devices, radios
- Outerwear such as coats, jackets, head wear, gloves
- Book bags, backpacks, handbags, briefcases, wallets
- Books, notes, study materials, or scratch paper
- Food, candy, gum, or beverages

If you bring any personal belongings to the test center, you must store them in a designated locker outside the testing room. You should keep in mind that the lockers are small and that mechanical or electronic devices stored in lockers must be turned off. Making notes of any kind during an examination, except on the laminated writing surface provided at the test center, is not permitted and removal of those materials from the secure testing area during a testing session or break is prohibited.

Note: Although the site provides noise-reducing headphones, you are encouraged to bring your own cordless soft-foam earplugs (subject to inspection).

6.6. Irregular Behavior During the Examination Process

Irregular behavior includes any action by candidates or others when solicited by a candidate that subverts or attempts to subvert the examination process. Test center administrators are required to report any irregular behavior by a candidate during the examination. Irregular behavior may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Seeking and/or obtaining access to examination materials
- Impersonating a candidate or engaging another individual to take the examination by proxy
- Giving, receiving, or obtaining unauthorized assistance during the examination or attempting to do so
- Making notes of any kind during an examination except on the erasable writing surface provided at the test center
- Memorizing and/or reproducing examination materials
- Failure to adhere to test center regulations
- Possessing unauthorized materials during an examination administration (eg, recording devices, photographic equipment, electronic paging devices, cellular telephones, reference materials)
- Any other behavior that threatens the integrity of the specialist certification examinations

Looking in the direction of the computer monitor of another candidate

during the examination may be construed as evidence of copying or attempting to copy, and a report of such behavior may result in a determination of irregular behavior. Candidates must not discuss the examination while a session is in process. Test center administrators are required to report all suspected incidents of irregular behavior. A candidate who engages in irregular behavior or who violates test administration rules may be subject to invalidation of their examination.

6.7. Canceled or Delayed Exam Administration or Problems at the Testing Center

Every effort is made to administer an examination at the scheduled test time and location. On occasion, however, exam administrations may be delayed or cancelled in emergencies such as severe weather, a natural disaster that renders a Prometric Testing Center (PTC) inaccessible or unsafe, or extreme technical difficulties. If Prometric closes a testing center where you have already scheduled a testing appointment, it will reschedule the examination appointment at no additional charge. In that event, Prometric will attempt to notify you in advance of your testing appointment to schedule a different time and/or center. Rescheduling an appointment for a different time or center may occur at the last minute due to limited availability of seats in a PTC.

One week prior to testing, you are advised to confirm your appointment with Prometric and maintain flexibility in any travel arrangements you may make.

If you experience an emergency situation on the day of your examination that you feel may jeopardize your ability to perform effectively on the examination, you may be eligible to postpone sitting for the examination until 2020. However, please note that if you opt to still sit for the examination and are not successful, this is not a basis for appealing examination results and your ability to sit again in 2020 at no additional cost may be in jeopardy.

Any candidate, once checked in and seated at a test station, who is delayed to take the examination by more than 30 minutes because of technical difficulties, is responsible for reporting the delay to the Specialist Certification Program at 800/999-2782, ext 8520, as soon as possible. For such cases, the candidate may be eligible to choose to reschedule his or her examination at no additional charge. Before deciding to reschedule, you should be sure that there is another appointment available during the testing-block. The test administration will not be considered "irregular" if you choose to remain and test despite the delay. You will receive the maximum number of hours available to candidates to complete the exam even if the test is delayed.

Any candidate, once checked in and seated at a test station, who has a concern or complaint about the test center environment, should immediately report the problem to the test center administrator. If you feel that the problem was not resolved to your satisfaction, you should contact the Specialist Certification Program at 800/999-2782, ext 8520, as soon as possible.

6.8. Exam Deferral

Candidates may defer their examinations through the ABPTS online application system located at www.abpts.org. To access your application click on "Online Application" from the Quick Links menu. Find your current application and click "History." On the left-hand side of the screen, click on "Applicant Admin." At the top of the Applicant Admin page is "Submit Deferment." It is recommended that you review the [deferral guidelines](#) before selecting "Yes" from the drop-down menu. Last, scroll to the bottom of the page, and click "Save" to complete the deferment request. Please note you will not receive an email confirming the deferment, but once you

click save that will finalize the process.

6.9. Equipment Malfunction

Should you experience any difficulty with the computer, please notify the test center administrator immediately. Do not wait until you have completed the exam to bring equipment malfunctions to the attention of the test center administrator. Once again, if you feel that the problem was not resolved to your satisfaction, you should contact the Specialist Certification Program at 800/999-2782, ext 8520, as soon as possible.

Please note that, occasionally, a computer at the test center may need to be restarted. Prometric has appropriate safeguards in place to ensure the integrity of candidate examination data. As soon as a candidate answers a test item, the response is immediately copied and saved on the candidate's directory on the server at a center. If there is a computer restart, the driver locates the results from the directory and picks up where the examinee left off. The system does not change or delete any responses. Thus, examination data are captured at the instant a candidate responds to a question; the computer can be restarted, if necessary, without losing or corrupting examination data.

6.10. Incomplete Examinations

After you start taking an examination, you cannot cancel or reschedule that examination unless a technical problem prevents you from completing your examination. As noted in section 6.9, if you experience a computer problem during the test, notify test center staff immediately. The testing software is designed to allow the test to restart at the point it was interrupted. In most cases, your test can be restarted at the point of interruption with no loss of testing time. If you do not finish the exam for any reason you are not permitted to resume the incomplete sections of the test. You must reapply for the next regularly scheduled administration (see section on "Reapplication" 3.7). The examination fee is nonrefundable for incomplete examinations.

7. EXAM RESULTS

7.1. Exam Results and Notification

After ABPTS meets in May 2019 to make certification decisions, score reports will be prepared for online distribution in mid-June 2019. The score report specifies your examination score, the passing score on the examination, and feedback on your performance in the major competency areas tested. In mid-June 2019, the Specialist Certification Program staff will send you an email notification announcing that score reports are available online, including instructions on how to access and download your score report.

Although there is a time lapse between the close of the examination window and the availability of examination results, much is happening during this period of time. Key validation takes place after the exam window closes in March. Key validation is a process of preliminary scoring and item analysis of the exam data, followed by careful evaluation of the item-level data, to identify potentially flawed or incorrect items prior to final scoring. During April and early May, standard setting committees are convened at the NBME to participate in content-based standard setting studies. The outcome of each committee's standard setting meeting is the recommendation of a passing standard of each of the specialty examinations during their May meeting. NBME then scores the specialist certification examinations and candidates are notified of their exam results as soon as this information is received by the Specialist Certification Program.

7.2. Scaled Scores

While your score is based on the number of questions answered correctly, it is a scaled score. ABPTS requires a scaled score of 500 to pass the examination. Scaling is a procedure that converts raw scores (number of correct responses) to a more easily interpretable scale. The purpose of scaling scores is to simplify things by keeping the passing score at the same number (eg, 500) for all exam forms, while the raw scores necessary for passing may vary for different forms.

7.3. Passing Scores

The certification examinations assess a clearly defined domain of knowledge and skills. You will be certified upon achievement of a passing score on the examination. The passing score is based on a detailed analysis of exam data and a recommended performance standard from a panel of clinical subject matter experts. This panel includes physical therapists in the specialty representing diversity in practice setting, years of experience, theoretical perspective, and geographic region.

Upon receiving board-certification, the candidate will:

- receive a certificate recognizing board certification as a specialist in an area of physical therapy
- be entitled to note they are “board-certified” in their specialty
- receive a board certified specialists lapel pin in his or her specialty area
- be recognized by his or her colleagues at APTA’s annual Ceremony for Recognition of Clinical Specialists at APTA’s Combined Sections Meeting
- be included in the online Directory of Certified Clinical Specialists in Physical Therapy

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

8.1. Confidentiality of Applicant Identity

Applicant names, application documents, and test scores are considered confidential. Only Specialist Certification Program staff, members of the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties, members of the Specialty Council, and designated staff at the NBME and its subcontractors shall have access to this information. Applicant identity can be released for study group purposes only, with the consent of each applicant. Copies of test scores will be released only at the written request of the candidate.

8.2. Confidentiality of Examination Content

All candidates must sign/acknowledge the Affidavit & Pledge of Confidentiality in their online application for certification. Candidates must not disclose examination content to others or reproduce any portion of the examination in any manner. The examination of any candidate who violates these security rules will not be scored.

9. GROUNDS FOR DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Applicants or candidates who are determined to have engaged in fraud, misrepresentation, or irregular behavior in the application or examination process, to have disclosed examination content to others or reproduced any portion of the examination in any manner, or to have violated the Affidavit & Pledge of Confidentiality will be subject to disciplinary action, to be determined by ABPTS, which may include, without limitation, withdrawal of any certification granted and permanent or temporary exclusion from the certification process. Before taking disciplinary action, ABPTS will give the individual written notice of the evidence against the candidate and an opportunity to respond.

10. PROCEDURES FOR REVIEW OF DECISIONS

10.1. Reconsideration of Decision Regarding Eligibility to Sit for the Exam

An applicant whom the Specialty Council has determined to be ineligible may request the Council to reconsider its denial of eligibility. The request for reconsideration must specify the grounds on which it is based. An applicant may submit new information in support of his or her request for reconsideration. An applicant may challenge the Specialty Council’s application of the eligibility requirements to his or her case, but not the requirements themselves. An applicant may not appeal to ABPTS unless he or she has first submitted a request for reconsideration to the Council. An applicant must submit his or her request for reconsideration no later than 2 weeks from the date of the denial letter. For purposes of determining compliance with the foregoing deadline, a request for reconsideration will be deemed submitted on the postmark date. The Specialty Council will notify the applicant in writing of its decision on reconsideration.

10.2. Appeal to ABPTS of Specialty Council’s Decision Regarding Eligibility to Sit for the Exam

An applicant who wishes to submit an appeal must contact the Specialist Certification Program for a complete copy of the procedures.

An applicant whom the Council has determined upon reconsideration to be ineligible may appeal the decision to ABPTS. An applicant may challenge the Council’s application of the eligibility requirements to his or her case, but not the requirements themselves. The applicant must submit his or her appeal no later than 2 weeks from the date of the Council’s decision on reconsideration. The appeal must be in writing and must be addressed to the Chair of ABPTS at the APTA Specialist Certification Program. For purposes of determining compliance with the foregoing deadline, a request for reconsideration will be deemed submitted on the postmark date. The appeal must specify the grounds on which it is based.

The Appeal Committee, a committee of ABPTS, will be responsible for the review and disposition of requests from applicants for appeal of a Specialty Council decision. The Appeal Committee will make its decision no later than 30 days from the date of receipt of the request for appeal.

The Appeal Committee will send written notification of its decision to the Chair of the Specialty Council and the applicant by certified mail, return receipt requested, no later than 7 days from the date of its decision.

10.3. Procedures for Review of Certification Actions

A candidate who wishes to request that ABPTS reconsider its decision to deny certification must request a complete copy of procedures from the Specialist Certification Program.

The purpose of the ABPTS reconsideration procedure is to enable a candidate to challenge an ABPTS decision denying certification and to seek relief from untoward circumstances associated with the onsite administration of the examination and errors in the transmission of examination responses due to technical malfunction. To be considered, the request must include supporting evidence of technical malfunction.

Candidates must submit a request for reconsideration in writing and address the request to the Chair of ABPTS at the APTA Specialist Certification Program. To request reconsideration, the candidate must submit a written request no later than 2 weeks after the date of the letter notifying the candidate of exam results. For purposes of determining compliance with the foregoing deadline, a request for reconsideration will be deemed submitted on the postmark date. The request for reconsideration must specify the grounds on which it is based and the corrective action sought. Within 7 days of the receipt of a request for consideration ABPTS will acknowledge in writing the receipt of the request, including the date on which the request was received.

10.4. Appeal to APTA Board of Directors of ABPTS Decision to Deny Certification

A person may not appeal to the APTA Board of Directors unless he or she has submitted a request for reconsideration to ABPTS. A candidate who wishes to submit an appeal must request a complete copy of procedures from the Specialist Certification Program. Any candidate adversely affected by the ABPTS decision on reconsideration may appeal to the APTA Board of Directors within 14 days of receipt of the ABPTS notification of the Appeal Committee's decision. A candidate must submit this appeal in writing, and the candidate must address it to the President of the APTA at the APTA Governance Department. The candidate must also send a copy of the written appeal to the Chair of ABPTS at the APTA Specialist Certification Program. The appeal must set forth arguments in support of the candidate's position. ABPTS will send written acknowledgment of receipt of the appeal to the candidate within 7 days after ABPTS receives the candidate's written appeal request.

11. NEUROLOGIC PHYSICAL THERAPY EXAMINATION

11.1 Exam Content Outline

The following is an outline summarizing the approximate examination percentages for each content domain. The outline also contains information on the examination content based on patient/client conditions. Examination questions can represent both a practice expectation and a knowledge area associated with that expectation. Please note that this is an approximation only and may not represent the exact distribution of questions on the examination. All questions on the exam relate to competencies outlined in the book *Description of Specialty Practice: Neurologic Physical Therapy*.

Content Area Domains % of Exam Questions

I. Knowledge Areas: 20%

- a. Foundation Sciences
- b. Behavioral Sciences
- c. Clinical Sciences
- d. Clinical Reasoning & Critical Inquiry

II. Professional Roles, Responsibilities, and Values: 15%

- a. Communication
- b. Education
- c. Consultation
- d. Evidence-based Practice
- e. Prevention, Wellness, & Health Promotion
- f. Social Responsibility
- g. Leadership
- h. Professional Development

III. Patient/Client Management Model: 65%

- A. Patient/Client Examination (30%)
 1. History & Systems Review
 2. Examination Procedures (Tests & Measures)
 3. Evaluation/Diagnosis/Prognosis
- B. Intervention (30%)
 1. Clinical Decision-making regarding plan of care
 2. Coordination, Communication, and Documentation
 3. Patient/client-related instruction
 4. Procedural Interventions
- C. Outcomes (5%)

TOTAL: 100%

Medical Conditions

The medical conditions that may be represented on the examination include (but are not limited to) the following:

1. Primary prevention of diseases, injuries, or functional decline of the neuromuscular system across the lifespan.
2. Promotion of health and wellness in populations with lifelong disability from neurologic conditions.
3. Prevention and management of body function and structure, activity limitations, and participation restrictions in individuals with conditions of the neuromuscular system, including:
 - Cerebral vascular accident
 - Traumatic brain injury
 - CNS tumors
 - Spinal cord injury
 - Cerebral palsy
 - Multiple sclerosis
 - Basal ganglia disorders (eg, Parkinson disease, Huntington disease, dystonias)
 - Cerebellar disorders
 - Dementia/Alzheimer's disease
 - Vestibular disorders
 - Falls and balance disorders
 - Peripheral neuropathy
 - Acute poliomyelitis and postpoliomyelitis syndrome
 - Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)
 - Guillain-Barré syndrome and polyneuropathies
 - Muscle disease
 - Amputations in individuals with neurologic disorders
 - Psychiatric disorders and aphysiologic disorders
 - General medical disorders affecting the neuromuscular system
 - Cardiovascular and pulmonary disorders in individuals with neurologic conditions
 - Musculoskeletal disorders in individuals with neurologic conditions
 - Integumentary dysfunction in individuals with neurologic conditions
 - Critical Illness Polyneuropathy/Myopathy

11.2 Sample Questions

Candidates for the specialist certification examination in neurologic physical therapy are encouraged to review the following sample questions in order to familiarize themselves with the examination format. *Please note that the questions listed below reflect the format but not necessarily the complexity of the actual examination questions.*

Use the following information to answer questions 1, 2, 3, and 4.

A 47-year-old woman who underwent removal of a pituitary tumor 8 months ago is referred to outpatient physical therapy by her primary care physician. The patient reports that her function has deteriorated ever since she had surgery to repair a hernia 2 weeks ago.

1. On evaluation, the physical therapist is most likely to find:
 - A. deficits in vision
 - B. involuntary movements
 - C. motor planning deficits
 - D. neglect syndrome
2. With which functional activity is this patient most likely to have greatest difficulty?
 - A. balancing her checkbook
 - B. performing sit to stand transfers
 - C. preparing a sandwich in her kitchen
 - D. telephoning a family member
3. Which of the following outcome tools is most appropriate for this patient?
 - A. Fugl-Meyer Test
 - B. Action Research Arm Test
 - C. Functional Reach Test
 - D. Motor Activity Log
4. During gait, the patient has significant forward trunk inclination. Which of the following sets of activities is most appropriate to incorporate into a home exercise program?
 - A. Lying prone over a ball, lifting of opposite and lower extremities
 - B. Standing with a ball between her back and a wall, active knee bends to 30 degrees
 - C. Sitting on a ball, rolling back into a bridge position with a ball under her scapulae, returning to sit
 - D. Ambulation on treadmill in gym in front of a mirror

Use the following information to answer questions 5, 6, and 7.

A physical therapist student is in the final affiliation on an acute rehabilitation unit. Previous clinical affiliations have included part-time experience in an acute-care hospital, full-time experience in an outpatient orthopedic setting, and full-time experience in a hand treatment center.

5. Which of the following traits is most critical to emphasize during this affiliation?
 - A. Ability to adapt treatment to changing patient condition
 - B. Capacity to collaborate with other health providers
 - C. Efficiency of physical therapy evaluation
 - D. Competence in hypothesis-oriented practice

6. The student tends to spend more time with young patients and seems reluctant to initiate treatment activities with older patients. When asked about this tendency, the student states, "I just don't feel comfortable around old people. I won't be working with them after I graduate, anyway." Which of the following responses is most appropriate?
 - A. "I don't care who you are going to work with after graduation. For now, you are in this clinic and have to treat all patients I assign to you."
 - B. "I don't really like old people either, but I work with them because it is my responsibility. You should too."
 - C. "Maybe there is a reason you feel the way you do. Can you think of anything?"
 - D. "Old people deserve your respect too. You have to change your attitude toward them."
7. The Academic Coordinator of Clinical Education (ACCE) at the student's school has developed a new student evaluation form and has asked that it be completed at 4 weeks and at 8 weeks in the affiliation. Comparing the scores on the 2 evaluations will assess which of the following types of validity?
 - A. concurrent
 - B. construct
 - C. content
 - D. predictive
8. Clinically, a person with a central cord injury will typically:
 - A. have intact sensation
 - B. have more difficulty climbing stairs than tying shoes
 - C. have more difficulty dressing than walking
 - D. propel a wheelchair with 1 arm and leg
9. Which of the following sets of findings is most likely in a patient with anterior horn cell disease?
 - A. Muscle atrophy, fasciculations, normal motor and sensory nerve conduction velocities, and giant motor unit potentials (MUPs) on electromyography (EMG)
 - B. Muscle atrophy, giant polyphasic MUPs on EMG, and stocking glove sensory loss
 - C. Muscle atrophy, slowed motor and sensory nerve conduction velocities, and giant polyphasic MUPs on EMG
 - D. Slowed motor nerve conduction velocity and MUPs with small amplitude on EMG
10. The use of electromyographic (EMG) biofeedback training to bring the normally unconscious control of specific muscles under conscious control is analogous to which stage of motor learning?
 - A. Associative
 - B. Autonomous
 - C. Cognitive
 - D. Transitive

Key: 1-A, 2-A, 3-B, 4-D, 5-B, 6-C, 7-D, 8-C, 9-A, 10-C

12. RESOURCE GUIDE INFORMATION

Resource guides are compiled by APTA sections and board-certified specialists to reflect current literature in the specialty area. They are provided for your information only. Neither the ABPTS nor the specialty councils has reviewed or endorsed the content of these lists. In addition, reviewing these resources does not guarantee that a candidate will receive a passing score on the specialist certification examination.

Neurologic Physical Therapy Resource Information

Academy of Neurologic Physical Therapy Inc. – APTA
Muna Addus
1055 North Fairfax Street, Suite 205
Alexandria, VA 22314-1484
Phone: 800/999-2782, ext. 3237
Email: neuro@apta.org
Website: <http://www.neuropt.org/>



Specialist Certification Program

American Physical Therapy Association

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